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ARE THERE ANY REAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN READING INSTRUCTION IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND IN THE HIGH SCHOOL?

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The factors which determine the nature of a reading program are discussed in order to identify differences in reading instruction at the elementary and secondary levels. These factors are the developmental status of the learner, the demands of the curriculum, and the structure of the reading process. The differences in the developmental status of an elementary school child and a high school student are brought about by physiological, intellectual, and emotional changes. These account for differences in interest and activities, increased social participation, greater insight and perceptiveness, richer vocabulary, and increased capacity for higher-level thinking as the learner matures. Well-defined subject areas at the elementary level require the development of concepts, vocabulary, and competencies in word perception and comprehension. At the secondary level, reading becomes more specialized and requires even greater proficiency. This does not imply that a reading skill is unique to a grade level. Reading growth is developmental. Reading skills, abilities, and understandings have their beginnings at the readiness level and are refined, mastered, and enriched at the secondary level. (NS)

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ARE THERE ANY REAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN READING INSTRUCTION IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND IN THE HIGH SCHOOL?

(Saturday morning session)

The seventeen programs running concurrently this morning are intended to deal with certain issues in reading on which there are divergent points of view, which, in turn, may affect the way reading is taught. Frankly, until Dr. Smith assigned me the topic, "Are there any real differences between reading instruction in the elementary school and in the high school?" I had never thought of this as being an issue. That there are differences between the instructional programs on the elementary and secondary levels is widely recognized and accepted. In fact, this is inherent in the

in the way the question is stated. The entrance of the controversy comes with the word, "real"--are the differences between the elementary and the secondary programs <u>real</u>, real being interpreted as a condition of sufficient worth to modify in a significant degree the goals of instruction, the nature of the content, and the instructional procedures. I interpret my job to be that of discussing the programs on the two levels along with factors that differentiate them. Fortunately for me, I am requested to do this in a neutral, unbiased, and unemotional manner. It will be up to the pro and con speakers to determine whether these differences are "real." I shall be as interested as you to learn whether they are.

Several factors condition the nature of an educational program in any skill area, be it mathematics, spelling, or reading. One is the developmental status of the learner, another is the demands of the curriculum areas where the skills will be used, and the third is the structure of the material to be learned. No one of these three factors alone is sufficient to determine what and how instruction should be given, for each operates in conjunction with the other two.

Developmental status of the learner

Let us consider first the factor of developmental status of the learner on the two levels under consideration.

It is an established axiom that what is taught should be related to the learner's growth or developmental status. One would hardly expect an entering first grader to sift out the relationships among ideas in a piece of expository writing and indicate them on a three-level outline. Neither would we expect a tenth grader to be challenged by the play antics of a neighborhood group of children in a story told with the vocabulary of the first three hundred words on the Thorndike-Lorge word list.

Children of elementary school age enjoy a vigorous, healthy life, with girls being about a year more mature than boys of the same age. Intellectual maturation proceeds rapidly, and longer periods of sustained effort and self-direction are possible. Vocabulary increases rapidly, as does depth of comprehension and analysis. Interests expand and become specialized and differentiated. Increased mental maturity enables the nine to eleven-year old to see idea relationships, generalize, and form conclusions. Socially, a cleavage between the sexes begins to put in its appearance with differences in interests between the two groups becoming apparent. Both boys and girls prefer group participation to individual, and the influence of the group or gang becomes more important than that of the home or school.

Developmentally, the twelve to seventeen year olds are in a period marked by many changes in all areas as they approach maturity. Anatomical and physiological

changes accompanying puberty have a direct bearing on interests and attitudes. Mental development continues with increased ability to do increasingly higher levels of thinking, see difficult relationships, and make more penetrating types of analyses. Paralleling the growth toward mental maturity is the increase in the background of experiences which affords the criteria against which to make judgments and comparisons. Group influences continue and become more potent during this period as they influence behavior, dress, standards, and interests. Sex differences in interests and activities are particularly noticeable during the junior high period, but become less striking toward the end of the high school period as youth begin to approach maturity. Increased social participation, interests in spectator sports, and school and work activities reduce the amount of time available for at-home activities which find favor with their younger brothers and sisters.

Curricular demands

Not only does the nature of the learner affect the nature of the reading program in different ways at the intermediate and secondary levels, but so do the demands of the various curricular areas. In one respect, one must look at the reading program as a service area. At each of the several rounds on the educational ladder, it must meet the reading needs placed

upon it by the several curricular areas; and those needs are different, at least in degree if not in kind, at the two levels we are discussing.

At the intermediate level, one finds the school program characterized by well-defined subject areas. Each requires a group of concepts and related vocabulary that needs to be developed. Study becomes an important activity and makes demands for a new set of competencies. Libraries are used as a source of information. Content in the various subject areas becomes increasingly difficult in terms of concept level, vocabulary, sentence length and complexity, and makes increased demands on the learner for greater facility and precision in word perception and comprehension.

At the secondary grade level, all that has been said of the elementary level could be repeated, but the advanced nature of the various curricular areas will make even greater reading demands. Reading becomes more highly specialized as the learner (now a student rather than a pupil) moves into the more specialized types of subject matter. In literature, for example, the student is concerned not only with such elements as plot and characterization in a narrative selection, but with the author's style and his method of accomplishing the desired mood or effect. In social studies, he must become aware of propaganda devices and their

subtle and, at times, insidious influences on ideas and attitudes. Because of the differentiated reading demands placed upon the high school student, he must learn how to adjust his reading to the requirements of the task in terms of rate, purpose, and outcomes. The student must become adept and independent in all aspects of the study act--setting, purposes, locating information, selecting and evaluating the ideas, and organizing them in the light of the study objective. Because of these curricular demands, the reading program is correspondingly affected in the way of objectives, materials, and methods.

Structure of the Reading Process

Reading is a complex activity. Those of us who research it, teach it, direct it, and the children who learn it recognize the truth of this statement, in spite of the fact that some would attempt to oversimplify the act by emphasizing only one of its main aspects. The Yearbook Committee preparing the section on the "Nature and Development of Reading" for the Forty-Seventh Yearbook, Part II of the National Society for the Study of Education stressed the developing complexity of the reading process. The Committee writes:

> Obviously, the concept of reading which we are now considering is a very broad one.... It is no longer conceived...as a unique mental process nor as a single activity involving many mental processes. It is rather a series of complex activities, the nature of which varies with the ends or values to be attained. (7:32).

The Committee then proceeded to break down the broad concept of reading into related understandings, attitudes, and skills. Three main divisions resulted, each having detailed subdivisions. Those three were: (a) understandings, attitudes, and skills in interpreting written and printed material; (b) adjustments in reading needed to achieve purposes dictated by the reader's interests and needs; and (c) information and techniques essential in locating, selecting, and using reading materials from various sources.

The Committee then proceeded to show that progress in the growth of reading ability is continuous from the primary level through college, but at rates which vary from individual to individual. Moreover, it said, "...whereas practically all major reading attitudes and skills function from the beginning, they mature at different times." Growth in the elementary grades is more pronounced in the basic aspects of reading, whereas on the secondary level it is concerned with the more mature types of interpretation, critical reaction, and integration.

Reading growth is a part of total language development of the individual and involves a series of sequential learnings or gradients from the pre-reading level through the adult years. Unfortunately, it is only on the early levels of language development that we have research evidence indicating the specific growth sequence. Though a sequence exists on the elementary and secondary

levels, it is usually empirically derived by curriculum designers and authors of reading programs. Hence, though the sequence may vary from one program to another, it is present none the less.

It is striking to note that the great majority of skills, abilities, and understandings that one finds employed on the secondary and advanced levels have their roots, their readiness at least, on the primary level. The program on the advanced levels is designed to increase ability, develop precision, broaden interests, and promote independence and self-direction. Hence, the major differences from one level to another may be those of degree rather than type, though, as we have pointed out, maturity in certain skill areas may be attained at different times.

Implications

It would be rather difficult to look at the reading program on any level and conclude that what is taught and the methods and materials used are the result of any one of the single factors discussed. Instead, what we see is the result of a combination of the influences of developmental status of the learner, demands of the curriculum, and the structure of the reading process.

Though the foundations of the basic skills of reading have been laid down on the primary level, grades four through six are needed to extend and develop these

competencies to the place where the young reader may perceive words with increased facility, use the dictionary with dispatch, comprehend stated and implied meanings in narrative and expository materials with increased precision, and be able to show evidence of the ability to think critically about the ideas expressed.

Since study is beginning to be an important activity in grades four through six, it would be on this level that the pupil takes initial steps in this activity and will discover what makes it different from reading done for enjoyment. And since study is an activity engaged in with specialized content--history, science, mathematics, etc., the learner needs to acquire the vocabulary and to learn to utilize reading abilities unique to each of the study areas. His study will require the use of source material; he will need to learn how to use the library. He will need to begin the process of adjusting his reading rate and procedure to the variety of purposes for which he is called upon to read.

During these years the teacher has the golden opportunity to establish habits of personal reading by capitalizing on the variety of interests that pupils show. The teacher must never lose sight of the fact that the personal and social development that take

place through reading is only the pay-off for the growth that takes place in reading as a process.

Of course, what is taught on this level, as well as on prior and succeeding levels, must be in terms of the level of development of the learner. Consequently, those pupils who have been traveling along the developmental spiral at a slower rate may need sequential instruction on levels several behind others who are moving at average rates. By the same token, those who are traveling at accelerated rates should be challenged by instruction on a more advanced level lest they die on the vine of boredom.

Any curricular guide establishing guidelines in reading for the elementary level will certainly make provision for special programs or services for those pupils in need of corrective and remedial help. On this level, if not before, those children who for one reason or another are falling below their potential for achievement must be identified and special help provided. Waiting until later only creates a more severe problem, usually with concomitant side effects.

All that we have said with respect to the reading objectives for the intermediate level could be repeated for the secondary. Bond and Kegler (1) indicate the primary goal of the high-school program as that of maintaining a balance between growth in essential reading

skills and abilities, expanding interests and improving tastes, increasing fluency, and adjusting the reading act to the demands of the various content fields.

It might appear that one is saying that the secondary program is only more of the same thing. True, one would likely find few distinctly new reading abilities being initiated and developed on the secondary level. Here the task is one of applying to material of increased difficulty the same skills and understandings that the reader has used on lower levels, but with still greater proficiency and depth of penetration in keeping with the reader's increased maturity, perceptiveness, insight, and experiential background.

This is precisely the point of view taken in program organization in the other language areas. In writing, for example, there are no skills of paragraph organization that are unique to the tenth grade. One is still concerned with topic sentences, sentence organization, connectives, and unity and coherence, all elements that we were concerned with in the elementary grades. But no one assumes that writing and speaking activities can be terminated on entrance into junior high school, for from here on these competencies must be refined, perfected, and made automatic.

A. Sterl Artley

Though it is no new instructional area on the secondary level, study demands special attention. Study is now serious business and during the six years or so of junior and senior high school, with possibly four years of college, it will be the student's primary concern. Competence in this activity cannot be developed through osmosis, nor can it be turned over to the fifth and sixth grade teachers alone. If study were the sole instructional job in the reading area in high school, we could still justify teaching time to do it adequately.

Instructional materials on both the elementary and secondary levels are varied. On the elementary level teachers make extensive use of basal readers and accompanying materials around which to promote continuous and sequential development in the essential reading competencies. A nation-wide survey made by the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University showed that 91 per cent of the teachers in grades four through six used basic readers from one or more series on from half to "all or most" days.(2). Several basal programs have extended materials for use in the seventh and eighth grades. From the ninth through the twelfth grades, the literature program may provide the avenue for continued reading growth. In addition, on both levels there are available special skill development

materials that may be used for either developmental or corrective reading.

On both levels, elementary as well as secondary, one cannot over-emphasize the place and importance of a well-equipped and staffed library having materials covering a full range of interests on various levels of difficulty. Though central libraries are quite universally found in secondary schools, such is not yet the case in elementary schools. Consequently it becomes difficult to talk about the development of reading interests and tastes, and the use of resource materials in study where the materials necessary for such use are not available in the first place.

One wishes that he might find more frequently on the secondary level materials for the various instructional units in the content areas on levels easier and more difficult than those commonly used for that given grade. Materials of this type are a must if the high school teacher is to build his program on what we know of the way young people grow--some slower, others much faster than the average for the grade. The lack of agreement between the elementary and secondary school is particularly noticeable on this point, for the elementary teacher, teaching in terms of the child, will send young people into junior high school reading on levels below (and above) grade seven. But frequently

the seventh or ninth grade teacher, concerned chiefly with his subject, expects all to conform to the middle of the distribution. Here is the beginning of the drop-out attitude on the part of many students.

On both levels, the methods and procedures employed to care for individual differences in achievement levels and learning rates are varied. If one were to make a survey of the organizational plan used most frequently by elementary teachers, he would undoubtedly find that some arrangement for grouping within the heterogeneous class would be the one most commonly used. This generalization is born out by the finding of the survey conducted by the Bureau of Applied Social Research to which we have already alluded. When teachers were asked what kind of classroom organization they would use with a group of approximately thirty-five children, eighty per cent of the teachers in Grade IV or higher answered, "Mainly instruction in groups based on reading ability." In addition to any major type of grouping, teachers frequently meet with individuals or small groups of children in special-help groups where a need is present for additional work. At times children may work in special interest groups where they will be discussing books dealing with a subject in which all are interested. Others may be working on an investigative project in

science. At still other times during the week the whole class may be together in a book club meeting or listening to the next chapter in a new book the teacher is reading aloud. By various grouping arrangements, the teacher is accommodating the gifted as well as the average or slower learners in her class.

In addition to any type of class grouping, one frequently finds special services available for those children whose achievement has fallen behind their reading potential and are in need of special help. As we mentioned, special services of this type are imperative on this level, for one of the major objectives of the elementary level is to send pupils into junior high school reading on a level commensurate with their potential, though that potential may not permit a reading level commensurate with their grade.

The elementary teacher is in a highly desirable position insofar as reading is concerned, for since she is likely to be in a self-contained classroom or in a team teaching situation, she, or those who are working closely with her, sees her children in many different kinds of reading situations--in the reading class itself, in science, social studies, and mathematics. Knowing her children and their needs, she is able to teach reading all day long and to make needed adjustments all along the line.

On the secondary level, the organizational pattern for reading instruction is not so clearly defined. In fact, one must report that in all too many secondary schools, reading is simply not taught. Cawelti (3) made a study of reading programs identified in a survey of Midwest high schools. Out of 47 schools surveyed, 27 had some type of reading program, but only 12 of those were sufficiently comprehensive to be called developmental, the others being remedial. In 21 of the 27 programs, instruction was provided through regular class periods, usually English, while in the remaining six, it was given in special periods.

Smith (6) conducted a study of the status and character of reading programs for grades VII and VIII in selected schools of Missouri. Though Smith found some type of program in 114 of the 140 schools studied, when he applied certain criteria of "comprehensiveness" the number of programs was reduced to 30. When he applied still further criteria of "soundness" to the programs, the number was further reduced to seven. In discussing reading programs, it is apparent that one needs to be cognizant of type and quality, for a "reading" program may be one little more than name. In spite of the emphasis on reading in the secondary school, the picture is far from encouraging.

Several factors militate against the organization of reading programs on the secondary level. One is

the idea still in the minds of many secondary administrators that reading instruction is the responsibility of the elementary school. Unlike the need for continued growth in the other language arts areas, it is assumed that students have attained maturity in reading at the end of the sixth grade. Secondary school guidance counselors who are responsible for recommending course programs are likewise unfamiliar with reading needs of students. They fail to differentiate those who need a program adjusted to their slower learning rate from those who are in need of corrective instruction.

But one of the major deterrents to a secondary reading program is the absence of trained personnel to organize such a program or to carry one out. Studies (Geake (4), Smith (6), Peyton & Below (5)) have been reported showing that difficulties in securing trained personnel stood as a deterrent to organizing a reading program. Frequently it was given as a reason for discontinuing one that had been in existence. The simple fact is that those in the business of teacher-training are not preparing teachers to assume such responsibilities. Most states now require an elementary teacher to have a course in reading methods for certification, but few have the same requirement for secondary teachers, even for those who are becoming teachers of English.

In all fairness though, the organization of the secondary school into subject areas with each area

taught by a subject specialist makes it much more difficult to carry out a unified reading program than on the elementary level where a given child is usually with his teacher all day long. Knowing his reading strengths and weakness, the teacher can work with the child in many different situations. On the secondary level no one knows the student well enough nor assumes the responsibility for meeting his special reading needs, whether they call for corrective work, an adjusted program, or enrichment. To put it succintly, there is a great deal to be done on the secondary level in the way of developing a sound and effective reading program.

In summary, the status of the learner, the demands of the curriculum, and the structure of the reading process itself are factors that determine the nature of the reading program on both the elementary and secondary levels. To what extent these factors account for "real" differences in reading instruction on these two levels is an issue that awaits the pro and con discussion of our next two speakers.

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